



MEMORANDUM FOR:

Harry. ● 2 Hrs.

Quick outline thoughts  
for USSD. These are mine;  
 will also be  
giving you a version.  


Date

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H. Ford  
2 March 1982

Quick Outline Thoughts for a  
10-Pager for NSSD

1. The US is now entering perhaps its greatest period of danger since World War II: not in the sense of imminent attack or peril, but of a certain unraveling and loss of control of events -- by both the US and the USSR. The web of forces creating this danger is complex. The unravelings are definite, a sort of growing geopolitical instability. The consequences for US security could be serious.

2. The foremost threat arises from the failure of US and allied security systems to contain the continuing, multi-faceted outward thrust of the USSR, its allies, and its agents. Moscow's leaders do not accept any existing status quo or system, and -- by practice and explicit admission -- are bent upon attempting to overturn the world's political, economic, and social system. The resulting threat to US position worldwide is significant, despite the irony of an imposed  <sup>Soviet</sup> system that has failed at home yet is attempting to impose those uncertain blessings on still more populations.

3. Moscow's <sup>primary</sup> chosen means is, of course, its great focus on military might . . . . The Soviet nuclear forces deter the US from the use of its nuclear arsenal in those theaters of conflict least likely to be engaged . . . . This leaves the great advantages the Soviets hold in conventional weapons to come into play in those theaters which have been and will almost certainly continue to be the most heavily engaged: conflict areas in the Third World . . . .

4. Here the second major web of growing geopolitical instability, the turmoil which engulfs so many situations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America . . .

- So many of these entities are inherently unstable, with often little experience in self-government.
- Many are inherently poor in resources and human skills, their economies further disrupted by rapidly rising energy costs over the last decade.
- There is a certain dying out of the initial degree of cohesion which marked many ex-colonial societies. Also a dying out of first generation -- often Western educated -- leadership. Second generation instability growing.
- So many of these societies have experienced only Western, but not Soviet imperialism. They need help, will take it wherever they will find it, and try to play off East against West. Many LDCs are thus riding the back of a tiger.

5. These Third World problems aggravated all the more by:

- A plurality of actors, a diminishing role of traditional international (Western) law, the changing of the UN from one instrument of US stability to an instrument of disruption.
- Many of these Third World actors now possess great power on their own -- oil, etc.
- The factor of instant communications, knowledge or pseudo-knowledge of events elsewhere, a great boon to instability.
- Great debt loads.
- . . .

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6. For US interests ~~one~~ of the most important aggravations in the Third World is <sup>often</sup> Soviet and pro-Soviet exploitation of the vulnerabilities there. Stress the great instrumentalities the USSR has patiently built up over the years. A worldwide subversive apparatus. Now the use of proxies . . .
7. The many instabilities present in nuclear proliferation . . .
8. The decline of detente and the arms control process, with nothing yet in their place . . . New weapons -- including space weapons -- increasingly looming . . .
9. The alliance systems of both East and West tending to come apart. Less predictability, more instability . . .
10. Loss of consensus in the West. Increasing fears of nuclear war over which the Europeans themselves feel they would have no say. A greatly increased questioning of US wisdom and constancy.
11. The new <sup>in</sup> stabilities and unravelings caused by resource shortages deserves full and top billing . . .
12. Areas/issues . . . where these destabilizing influences particularly <sup>by</sup> coincide are:
  - a. The gulf . . .
  - b. Central America/Caribbean . . .
  - c. Palestinian and related questions . . .
  - d. Southern Africa . . .
13. All these destabilizing factors roughly coincide in time and place. This places great premium on the accuracy with which US leaders see

and interpret the world, and on their knowledge of the true sources of problems, and remedy. Demands also US steady nerves, imaginativeness . . .

14. There are of course countless offsetting factors:

- Opportunity to rebuild confidence in US wisdom and constancy.
- The incredible economic, technical and administrative resources of the US, the West, Japan, and some of the friendly developing nations.
- The USSR's own great weaknesses and constraints.
- The demonstrated nature of Soviet dominance in Afghanistan and Poland.
- The many vulnerabilities the USSR has at its extremities of empire, and US and Western opportunities to exploit . . .
- The strategic advantages the US relationship with China brings us.
- The opportunity the US has to get certain albatrosses off our backs in certain parts of the world.
- The opportunity the US has to find areas of common interest with the USSR and to use those in the interests of reducing uncertainty and -- above all -- the chance of wars by accident.

For example:

- Joint interest in nuclear non-proliferation
  - Arms control
  - Not permitting our respective proxies to preempt US or Soviet decisionmaking
  - . . . . .
  - Planetary survival
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